Michael Galuppo

Ramadan is the ninth mouth of the Islamic calender, and it is the holiest month for many reasons. First, the Qu’ran, or the holy book of Islam, was first received during this month. Also Muslims fast during this month, and supposably the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are colsed in this month. The night that the Prophet Muhammad received the Qu’ran was called [**Lailat ul Qadr**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/lailatalqadr.shtml), and Ramadan is often called 'month of the Qur'an' because of this. Muslims try to recite as much of the Qur'an as they can in the span of the month. Many mosques will read one thirtieth of the Qur'an each night during the Taraweeh prayers. The Taraweeh prayers are long, reccomended prayers, lasting one or two hours. Last, Muslims fast during the day during the entire month of Ramadan, which is refraining from eating or drinking, during the day, and they may eat at night.

Another holy day for Muslims is called Ashura. It is a day of fasting and worship of God, or Allah, for Sunni Muslims and has been since the early days of Islam. It is celebrated because of two historical events that took place. The first is the day Noah exited the Ark after 40 days and 40 nights, and the day that Moses saved the Isrealits from captivity of the Egyptians. The Shi’a Muslims celebrated the day to honor the martyrdom of Hussein in 680 CE. They also celebrate by fasting and worshipping. The Shi’ite Muslims make it a more somber day. They put on plays of Hussein that are part of the sad rituals. Each year in London, Shi'a Muslims go to a place called Marble Arch to mourn. This gathering attracts over 3000 people from many cultural backgrounds.